

"PROGRESS AND POVERTY": AFTER A HALF CENTURY

We gladly announced last month that the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation of America were about to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of *Progress and Poverty* by a special edition of the great masterpiece of Henry George.

This work has now been published. The book is a handsome one and carries a portrait of the author, reproduced from the oil painting by Harry Thurston Lee, recently acquired by the Foundation. There is a notable explanatory Foreword from which we quote:—

The fame won by Henry George as writer, economist and philosopher, has not diminished with the years that have passed since his death in 1897. On the contrary, there has been a steadily broadening recognition of his intellectual eminence. It must appear to that growing body of workers for social justice who, in many lands, are spreading George's gospel, that there is at this time as great a need as ever for the comprehension of the truth he sought to make plain. For, as in 1879, there is widespread social unrest in the world. Industrial depression and unemployment are conditions common to many lands, and even in the nominally prosperous atmosphere of the United States, vast numbers are compelled to live in poverty or close to its border line. In the half century since *Progress and Poverty* was published, there has been little abatement of the social and economic ills that have afflicted the human family everywhere; and that recur, with unfailing regularity, in cycles that seem unexplainable except to the followers of Henry George.

Greater need than ever exists for a re-examination by mankind of the remedy for the world's social and economic ills that is involved in the fundamental proposals of Henry George—proposals which Tolstoy declared must ultimately be accepted by the world because they are so logical and so unanswerable.

This Fiftieth Anniversary Edition of *Progress and Poverty* now constitutes a page in the history of the movement it brought into being. It goes on record as a passing tribute to the greatest work on political economy and its humanities there is to be found in any language. If the gift is to the giver, in this instance it can be said with emphasis.

In thus paying homage to Henry George the Foundation is doing honour to its own trust and to all who derive from the book the knowledge and the inspiration that spring from the recognition of "a truth that will harmonise with all other truth."

Progress and Poverty is assuredly one of these epoch-making works that come to mankind "that they may have life and have it more abundantly." Its influence in moulding thought is not in question. Fifty years ago it was hailed as a new voice and one that would be heard in the great inquiry into the maldistribution of wealth and opportunity. Thinkers and statesmen everywhere were made to realize that a new force had entered into the public discussion of fundamental questions.

The book could not be ignored. Its message still prevails. It could not be suppressed, not even by the "conspiracy of silence." To-day the philosophy of Henry George holds its own against the current philosophy, and his practical proposals are widely accepted by organised political parties. The land value policy advocated in *Progress and Poverty* is in operation in several lands and the agitation for radical land and rating reform is the backbone of the agitation for municipal life and expansion. If there be any

honest doubters, and there are, who want concrete evidence of this claim let them look at Sydney, Wellington, Johannesburg, East London (South Africa) and Denmark. They are our working models. Legislation means propaganda that tells, and these "seats of learning" exist to strengthen every true follower of Henry George in the work that lies to his hand.

The influence of *Progress and Poverty* this past half century has been quite beyond the most sanguine expectation of its author. In the Introduction to his second great work, *The Science of Political Economy*, Henry George says:—

"The years which have elapsed since the publication of *Progress and Poverty* have been on my part devoted to the propagation of the truths taught in *Progress and Poverty* by books, pamphlets, magazine articles, newspaper work, lectures and speeches, and have been so greatly successful as not only far to exceed what fifteen years ago I could have dared to look forward to in this time. . . . Not merely wherever the English tongue is spoken, but in all parts of the world, men are arising who will carry forward to final triumph the great movement which *Progress and Poverty* began. The great work is not done, but it is commenced, and can never go back."

It can never go back; it is going forward. The spirit of Henry George is more alive to-day than when he first took to the platform to give utterance to his belief that the root cause of unmerited poverty was to be found in the denial of the right of everyone to an equal share in the bounties of the Creator.

Some philosopher has said: "Sow a thought and you reap an act; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny." The thought that inspired the writing of *Progress and Poverty* still prevails. The character of its author is our inheritance; the destiny will yet be reaped, and then, and not till then, will the race begin the morning of its life. J. P.

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